



Parent Information Network

Arizona Department of Education
Exceptional Student Services



Transition Point 2: Preschool to Kindergarten

Transition: The Next Step

Transition is movement or change without interruption. It should be a smooth flow from one place or condition to another. While the transition plan for a student receiving special education services is designed to prepare him or her for life after high school, transition can start when a child enters preschool or at kindergarten. There are six distinct stages or transition points. The second stage is from preschool to kindergarten.

Factors of Change

One of the major changes from preschool to kindergarten is found in the different categories of disabilities for which a child may qualify. In grades kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12), there are thirteen categories of disabilities in the public school.

One of the activities the school staff will need to do is an evaluation before an Individual Educational Program (IEP) can be developed for a child for kindergarten. This is done to help the school staff determine if a child may be eligible for special education services based on the definition of specific categories as required in Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA'97). This is the federal law that governs the education of children with disabilities in public schools ages 3 -21. Your child must meet the criteria for one of the categories for ages 5-21. The child's need for special education and/or related services will be determined by the multidisciplinary evaluation team (MET). An IEP will be written following a determination of a need for continued special education services. The parent is an integral part of this team that determines eligibility. Parents bringing information from medical specialists on the child's medical history may also help the MET complete a thorough evaluation.

Generally, staff from the school/charter in which the family resides will attend the IEP meeting. This meeting is held at the regular IEP date for

the child on the year when he/she will be 5 years old on or before September 1. At this time, the IEP will be developed to include the child's kindergarten experience. This is done so there will be no lack of services for the child as he/she begins kindergarten. The evaluation and planning for the transition to kindergarten may take more than one meeting.

Ages and Stages

It sometimes helps to look at how the majority of children age five are developing. This will aid the parent and the school staff in determining the educational needs of the child, and where those needs may be most appropriately met.

These are some things normally developing five year olds can typically do: copy squares, string beads, fasten buttons that are visible to the eye, zip and unzip a zipper, and sometimes tie a shoelace. Children with physical and/or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing these activities.

The typical five year old likes playground challenges, dresses self without the help of others, can say number words one through ten, has a vocabulary larger than 1000 words, and a well established language, with correct grammar being used most of the time. Pretend play with other children is developing. Five year olds are able to tell the difference between physical characteristics of family members and others who are not family members. They know the location of things, such as the location of food, shelter, or danger. The five year old should be able to focus on a task for more than 20 minutes at a time. He or she can remember things: where things belong and where things are placed. Children with disabilities may find some of the activities a little difficult or, in some cases, may not be able to accomplish any of the age appropriate tasks yet. The parents need to focus on what the child is able to do.

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At age five, children generally are able to tolerate separation from parents more easily for school attendance, especially if the teacher is sensitive and involved with the child. For a child with a disability, separation may or may not be a challenge for everyone involved: the child, the parent(s), and the school staff. Be patient. With time, everyone may settle in with the new routines of going to school more frequently, for longer periods of time, and having new staff members.

Making the Transition Smoother

There are several possible activities that the parent may wish to do in order for the child to move smoothly from the comfort of the preschool setting to the newness of the kindergarten setting.

The parent may request the preschool staff invite the elementary school staff to a transition meeting in the spring, if one has not been scheduled. This will allow time for evaluation activities, and IEP review.

The parent may go to the school and meet the principal and/or the director of special education. A parent may know what is needed to help the child have a smooth transition from preschool to kindergarten. In most cases, the parent will find that there is already a good transition system in place. The nice thing about this step is that it allows the parent to plan ahead, to relax and wait for the work through their process and procedures. It will give a time table so everyone will know if there is a need for an appointment.

References

Arizona Department of Education Exceptional Student Services; Transition Services: Developing And Including Transition Services in the IEP, November, 1995.

Bunnett, R & Brown, M. (1997). *Amigos en la Escuela*. Austin, TX: Star Bright Books.

Coleman, Jeanine G. (1999). *The early Intervention Dictionary*. Rockville MD: Woodbine House.

Meyer, Donald. J. (1999). *Uncommon Fathers: Reflections on raising a Child with a Disability*. Rockville, MD. Woodbine House.

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities. (1997). *Parenting a Child with Special Needs*. . Washington, DC: NICHCY.

Organizations

Arizona Early Intervention Project, (AzEIP)

www.de.az.us/AzEIP

Council for Exceptional Children, 1110 Glebe Rd. Ste. 300 Arlington, VA 22201-5704,

888-CEC-SPED, www.cec.sped.org

Enhancing Arizona Parent Networks (EAPN)

<http://www.ade.az.gov/ess/eapn>

IHD Assistive Technology Center

www.nau.edu/IHD

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHY) P.O. Box 1492,

Washington, DC 20013-1492, 800-695-0285

<http://www.nichcy.org>

Parent Information Network, Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, 800-352-4558, 602-364-4015

www.ade.az.gov/ess/pin/pals

Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona 2600 N. Wyatt, Tucson, Arizona 520-324-3150

www.pilotparents.org

Raising Special Kids 800-23 7-3 007 in Phoenix, AZ www.raisingpecialkids.org

The Hall of Early Childhood www.tenet.edu